



Soil erosion and land slides have been another connected problem. With uprooting of trees on a large scale some areas have lost the natural protection of roots which hold the soil together, of leaves and branches which break the impact of rain drops on the soil and wash it away, and of allowing water to flow down instead of holding it to seep through the roots.

Increasing population is also making demands on the environment. Food production has to be stepped up to meet the growing needs of this population and invariably agro-chemicals are harnessed for this purpose. This in turn has given rise to problems of insecticide and pesticide poisoning and reduction of soil fertility.

Another problem, particularly in Sri Lanka, is that of meeting the fuel requirements of a growing population. It was found in the early 80's that as much as 95 percent of the population used fuel wood which means that there were severe pressures on existing forest resources in specific areas. In the name of development, industries also create problems of environment degradation. Disposal of industrial wastes have been a problem of urban areas in Sri Lanka too. For instance, aquatic life in rivers and lagoons are affected by industrial pollution while vegetable cultivation, particularly green leaves, a source of livelihood for the informal sector, has also been affected.

This is the second special issue of the 'Economic Review' on the environment. The first was in 1980, which brought in a major overview of the environment. Before that and since then, we have been publishing regular feature articles on the environment.

This special issue covers some major concerns on the environment in Sri Lanka and in the developing countries in general.

## Environment Endangered

There is a questioning today about the triumph and benefits of technology and the divorce between man and nature it has brought about. This division is gradually undermining everyday life and leading to a crisis between man and his environment. Some obvious symptoms of the change in the relationship between man and his environment are the various forms of pollution; poor management of the soil, forests and water; uncontrolled urbanization; destruction of existing life support systems; and the crushing of traditional cultures.

The environmental crisis, which is undermining physical and biolog-

ical surroundings, is a by-product of the accelerated expansion of man's domination of the planet and his exploitation of natural resources.

Several of these issues are also affecting Sri Lanka today. The continuous drought that affected the main agricultural areas over the last two to three years seems to be an outcome of the imbalances in the country's environmental situation. The coming up of several areas for land settlement and continuous deforestation is said to have affected rainfall patterns and also the soil.